

## LaGrange Choosing Town Center Over Strip Development

By John Clarke, Development & Design Coordinator

The hamlet of Freedom Plains has long been the center of LaGrange, just look at any 19<sup>th</sup> century map. Many of the civic pieces are still there - a post office, two churches including the historic landmark Presbyterian Church, a Grange Hall, the Arlington High School, and the Town Hall down Stringham Road.

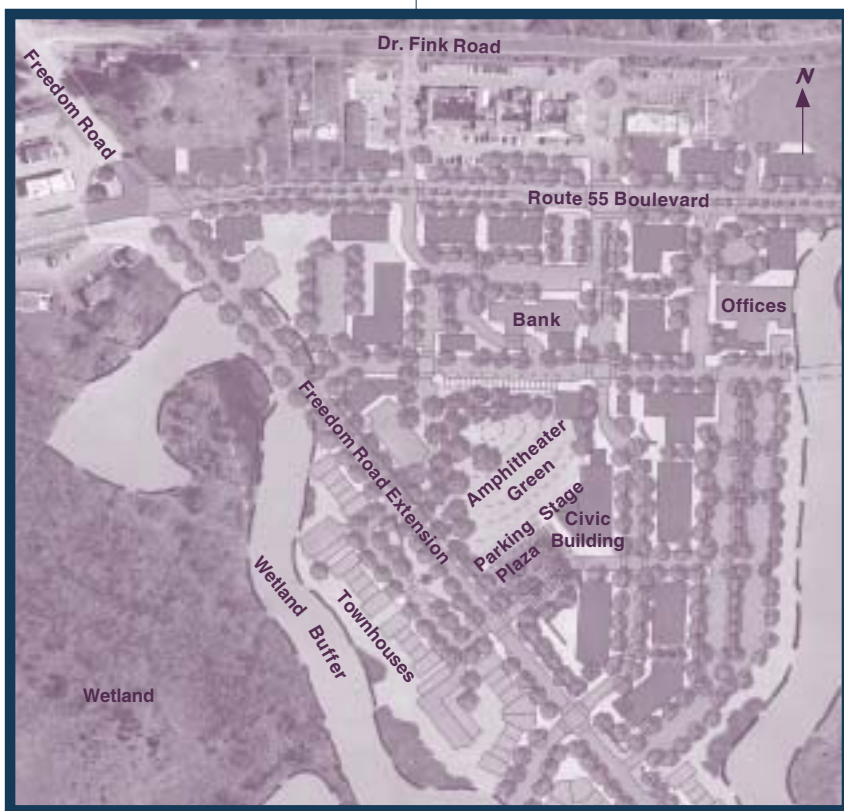
But recent commercial sites are all designed for the automobile with parking lots all around. They are spread out with no connecting sidewalks or crosswalks. Now Freedom Plains functions more as a Route 55 commercial strip than a central place. So the last Comprehensive Plan recommended that Freedom Plains be redesigned as a "Town Center...the community's commercial and social hub."

Before it became too late to "retrofit the strip", the Town Board has decided to

implement the 1987 Plan with the help of the Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development and the town's engineers, The Chazen Companies. Working with the Master Plan Committee, a color Illustrative Plan has been produced to paint the long-term vision for the area and a set of Town Center design principles has been adopted by the Town Board.

A new section to the zoning law is being drafted to concentrate new commercial and residential development in the Town Center area, as a clear alternative to continued strip commercial along Route 55 and random subdivisions along outlying rural roads. A 2-3 story, mixed-use commercial core is proposed within a ¼-mile radius of the center, surrounded by a compact residential neighborhood within a ½-mile walking distance.

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*A section of the Town Center Illustrative Plan; intended not for site-specific purposes, but to illustrate design principles and general block and street patterns.*

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## New Report Banishes Apartment Myths

By Anne Saylor, Housing Coordinator

Most master plans in Dutchess County note the need for a variety of housing types for the social and economic health of our communities. Unfortunately these sentiments too rarely translate into the zoning laws, **where almost no land is zoned for multi-family housing/apartments.** Often, multi-family housing is "zoned out" because residents and local officials are concerned by a variety of myths about apartments and how they impact taxes, schools, property values, safety and traffic. A recently released report produced by the *National Multi-Housing Council* and the *National Apartment Association/Joint Legislative Program* entitled *Creating Successful Communities, A New Housing Paradigm*, attempts to break down the myths and provide residents and local officials with the most current research on the impacts of apartments on a community.

According to the report, the "American Dream" is changing as an increasing number of households are choosing to rent although they could afford to purchase a home. This is in large part due to a change in types and sizes of households. In Dutchess County, average household size is down to 2.63 persons per unit, with renter households having 2.23 persons per unit. **One and two-person households make up 56.1% of the County's population.**

*Continued on page 2*

As noted in the report, these households are drawn to apartments by proximity to work/shopping, lack of homeowner chores, and freedom to respond to job changes, among other benefits. Recent research shows that 40 percent of households living in apartments are doing so by choice and not because of their financial situation. The research also notes that households earning \$50,000 or more are the fastest growing segment of the apartment market.

In addition to pointing out the need for apartments, the report also refutes the common belief that apartments have more children and do not pay for the public services they use. The report states that information from the Census Bureau's 1999 American Housing Survey shows that per unit, **new single-family houses have three times the school-age children as apartments.** Other analyses also show similar trends, and although the results will vary for different areas of the country, school districts, etc., the conclusion is clear- apartments generate fewer school children per unit than single-family homes. Based on this information, it would be difficult to justify limiting apartment construction to relieve pressure on the local school system.

The report addresses the tax issue by noting that renters pay taxes via their rent, and often pay at a higher rate than single-family homeowners. **A national study of effective tax rates shows that apartments pay almost two times that of single-family homes.** In New York State the effective tax rate for apartments was almost six times that of single-family homes.



*A new single-family home with an accessory apartment over the garage in Kentlands, Maryland.*

Homeowners often express concern about the effect of apartments on their property values. Current research shows that the difference in value of homes near new apartments vs. homes not near apartments is insignificant. The Urban

motor vehicle per household, while owner-occupied houses average two vehicles;

- **apartment households generate 30 to 40 percent fewer trips than single-family units;** and
- apartment residents are more likely to use public transportation than single-family residents.

Regarding safety, research shows that crime rates between different types of housing are comparable. Many apartment residents say they feel safer because of the proximity to other residents and security items such as alarms and controlled access systems. Finally, the report notes that apartments use infrastructure more efficiently than single-family homes because apartments are generally located in areas where infrastructure is already in place. It also costs less, on a per household basis, to provide public services for apartments because their compact layout requires fewer miles of road, sewer and water lines. Public services such as police and fire protection, trash collection and snow removal can also be provided more efficiently because of the higher density.

Full copies of the report are available

*A conceptual development with retail on the first floor and apartments above, currently proposed for Main St., in the City of Poughkeepsie.*



## PLAN ON IT STAFF

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*PLAN ON IT is a publication of the Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development in conjunction with the Dutchess County Planning Federation. PLAN ON IT brings local, regional and state planning news to over 1600 individuals and organizations. If you would like to be added to our mailing list or wish to share your views on planning, write to Editor, PLAN ON IT, 27 High Street, 2nd Floor, Poughkeepsie, N.Y. 12601, or phone (845) 486-3600. PLAN ON IT is also posted on our website at [www.dutchessny.gov](http://www.dutchessny.gov).*

Land Institute reports that between 1987 and 1995, the average annual appreciation for single-family homes within 300 feet of an apartment building was 3.12 percent, compared to 3.19 for single-family houses not near apartment property. It is certainly possible with good planning, design and management, to build apartment complexes that are fully compatible with surrounding single-family neighborhoods.

The report also addresses the issues of traffic congestion, safety and infrastructure. Many residents are concerned that apartments will increase traffic congestion, but according to the report the reality is that apartments can often contribute less to congestion for a variety of reasons:

- apartment residents average one

from the National Multi-Housing Council (202) 974-2300/ [www.nmhc.org](http://www.nmhc.org) or the National Apartment Association (703) 518-6141/[www.naahq.org](http://www.naahq.org).



*A new four-unit apartment dwelling (left) blends in nicely with the neighboring single-family homes (right) in Orenco Station, Oregon.*

## LaGrange Town Center Design Principles:

- Designed to park once and walk around
- Buildings brought up to the sidewalk and street
- On-street parking and shared parking lots to the rear
- Two or more story buildings with a mix of uses
- Central greens and centerpiece civic buildings
- Interconnected street system for easier access
- Narrow, tree-lined streets to slow traffic
- Multiple housing options within walking distance
- Protection of important natural and historic features

If traffic and other community concerns can be resolved, Freedom Plains could be the first newly created village-scale center in Dutchess County since the early railroad era of the 1800s.

LaGrange is not alone in seeking a stronger town center. Hyde Park's Comprehensive Plan and proposed Zoning Law also consolidate development opportunities in and around the Town Center core and neighborhood centers. Because both communities are Greenway Compact members and the town center concept is consistent with Greenway principles, Hyde Park and LaGrange recently received Greenway Compact grants of \$30,000 and \$10,000 respectively for their rezoning projects. The towns of Beekman and Union Vale are also considering development of town centers.

For more information about the LaGrange Town Center contact Joe Luna at the Town of LaGrange, or John Clarke at Dutchess County Planning and Development. 🌳

## Board Certification Program to Be Offered

By Neil Wilson, Dutchess County Planning Federation President

The Dutchess County Legislature and the Dutchess County Planning Federation are co-sponsoring the first countywide opportunity in New York State to certify local board members in conjunction with a training program. The new one-day **Dutchess County Land Use Leadership Certification Program** will be conducted by the Pace Law School's Land Use Law Center. The program will focus on using existing NYS Land Use Law to more successfully deal with issues of growth by concentrating on board training, development and reinforcement of local land use decision-making skills, and specific community issues.

The training program is designed for zoning and planning board members, and members of local administrative and legislative boards. Sessions will be conducted in each of the county's four regions: Northern, Western, Central, and Eastern Dutchess. The first session was held this fall in the Eastern Dutchess region on October 30, 2002. The Northern Dutchess region is scheduled for December 2, 2002. The remaining regional courses are scheduled for January and February 2003. Each community will be invited to send up to five local leaders to their regional training program.

The one-day program will start with a basic course on the land use system and the roles and procedures of administrative, quasi-judicial and legislative boards, followed by a more advanced session on how communities can achieve growth appropriate to their community. This session will provide a more detailed look at a number of topics including:

- defining growth to include both economic development and open space preservation;
- using local land use tools and techniques to create affordable housing opportunities;
- creating and sustaining growth centers and encouraging economic development while achieving open space conservation; and
- coordinating land use and transportation planning.

After attending the Dutchess County Land Use Leadership Certification Program, the board members will bring a certification course back to their communities. This certification course will include nine training modules designed for busy volunteer board

## Staff Notes

Monica Rusko joined the Department of Planning and Development in May as a Program Assistant working with Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Monica has a B.A. in Business. She will be responsible for creating databases for the Planning and Health departments as well as doing mapping for both.



Danielle Aiello has joined the Department of Planning and Development as a GIS Technician. Danielle received a B.A. in Geography from SUNY New Paltz last May. She will be creating a wide variety of useful maps for the department and local communities, as well as managing data and creating GIS databases.

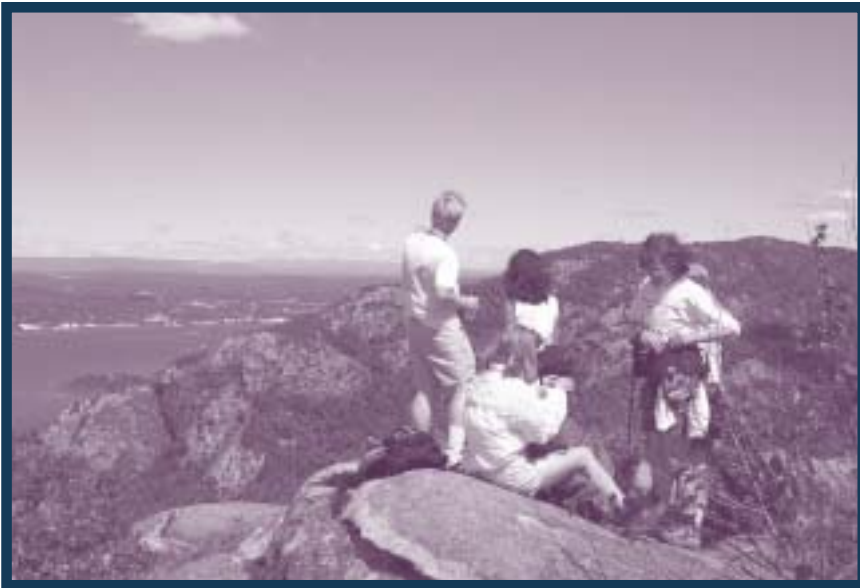


Welcome Monica and Danielle!

members who do not have time to attend training programs on a regular basis. Once a majority of a municipality's zoning and planning board members have taken and passed the course, these boards will be certified.

The Dutchess County Planning Federation's Board of Directors would like to encourage all eligible course participants to make the time to attend this worthwhile event. Notices regarding this program have already been mailed to each member of the target agencies with contact information included. 🌳





*Trail Tour members rest and enjoy the views of the Hudson River and beyond from Breakneck Ridge in the Hudson Highlands just south of Dutchess County.*

## **Touring the Hudson Valley**

*By Bob Wills, GIS Coordinator*

Over ten hot days in August, I participated in the Hudson River Greenway's "End To End" Trail Tour. The Hudson River Valley Greenway and the National Park Service organized this event as a way to highlight the route of the Greenway Trail and the good planning taking place in member communities all along the shores of the Hudson.

The seven members of our core group participated in bicycling and hiking from Manhattan's Battery Park to Battery Park in Waterford, Saratoga County, covering a total of about 250 miles. Joining us on each of the Tour's ten days were as many as 30 local community members, who led the group on mini-tours of significant community planning efforts, including new trails, waterfront development projects, and river access improvements.

The interest, activism, and action of people up and down the Hudson was just amazing. From major projects like the Yonkers Waterfront to trail projects like the Rhinebeck and Red Hook Historic District Trail, grassroots efforts led to partnerships between developers, community groups, individuals, and municipalities willing to

embrace the Greenway and its planning principles.

At a ceremony at the Wappinger Creek in the Village of Wappingers Falls, County Executive Bill Steinhaus spoke about the exemplary efforts taking place in Dutchess County. In particular, he spoke of the trail work around the Wappinger Creek that was spearheaded by the Wappinger Greenway Committee, and developed into a partnership between the County, The Towns of Poughkeepsie and Wappinger, the Village of Wappingers Falls, Scenic Hudson, Putnam Highland Audubon, the Wappinger Historical Society, and other local groups and citizens. "This committee represents a true public/private partnership, which is the key to its success," said County Executive Steinhaus. Their work included the establishment of a link between the Wappinger Greenway Trail and the County's Bowdoin Park. This link allows park visitors the opportunity to explore the tremendous beauty of the Wappinger Creek and provides trail users with needed parking, restrooms and other amenities available at Bowdoin Park.

So what was my favorite activity of the tour? Without a doubt, it was looking at West Point and Storm King from the top of Breakneck Ridge: right here, next to my home in Dutchess County, one of the greatest panoramas to be found. 🌳



*County Executive Bill Steinhaus joined the municipal officials from the Wappinger Greenway Trail communities in welcoming the Hudson River Greenway Trail Tour to Dutchess County, and spoke about the progress being made in Dutchess County on the envisioned Greenway trail system.*



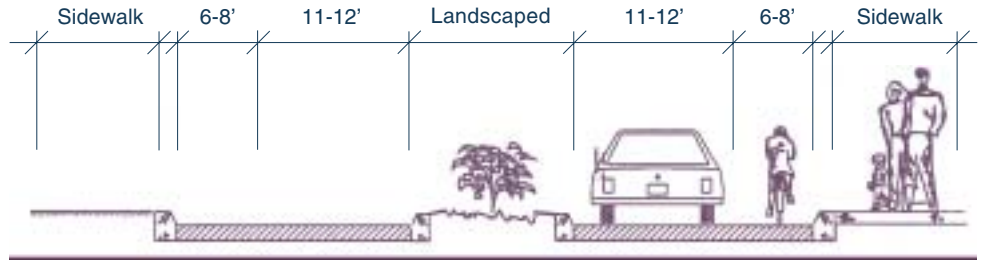
# Protecting the Future of Route 22

By Kealy Salomon, Transportation Program Administrator, Poughkeepsie-Dutchess County Transportation Council

It's almost 40 miles from the Putnam County line to the Columbia County line along Route 22. The highway traverses four towns and two villages, and forms what County Executive William R. Steinhaus calls "The spine of the Harlem Valley." In mid-2000 the Poughkeepsie-Dutchess County Transportation Council (PDCTC) and the Harlem Valley Partnership for Economic Development (HVP) teamed up to look at the future of this critical highway, and the process was completed this past July with the publication of The Route 22 Corridor Management Plan. Along the way there were two travel surveys, three public meetings, eleven major goal statements, and almost fifty separate strategies that are designed to accommodate new growth, maintain the rural character, improve safety and protect the capacity of the road.

The following strategies are among the plan recommendations:

- Develop typical cross-sections for different segments of Route 22: rural, hamlet/village, and divided or undivided commercial (See graphic);
- Use cluster overlays, mixed use zoning, density bonuses, and appropriate water and sewer expansions to define priority growth areas and open space areas within the corridor;
- Examine in detail the capacity and safety concerns that have been identified at various locations in the corridor. Among the locations listed in the plan are the intersections at Aikendale Rd. in Pawling, Mill St. and CR 21-Pleasant Ridge Rd. in Dover, Route 44/343 in Amenia, Haight Rd. in North East, and Route 44 in Millerton;
- Develop a coordinated Harlem Valley Signage Plan in cooperation with the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT); and
- Expand pedestrian and bicycle connections in key locations.



*This cross-section was developed as a recommended model for the commercial areas of Route 22 south of Route 55. It includes bike lanes and sidewalks on both sides of the road with a landscaped median in the center. The medians would limit access across the highway and, as a result, reduce potential for accidents.*

In the *Next Steps* section of the Plan, a "primary responsibility matrix" indicates whether the lead for a suggested strategy should be the local governments, the NYSDOT, or a combination. In general, the zoning and land use regulations belong to the local governments, and physical improvements to the highway are the responsibility of NYSDOT. Other actions like the implementation of the cross-section guidelines and the Harlem Valley Signage Plan will need to be handled cooperatively.

The project was truly a team effort. Most of the technical work was completed by the project consultants, C&S Engineers and Howard/Stein-Hudson, with the guidance of a local steering committee and assistance from local staff at HVP,

PDCTC and NYSDOT. At the final public meeting in May, HVP President Anne Sanford noted that there was "unprecedented local involvement and cooperation among the various levels of government on this project, and we expect it to continue as we begin implementation of the plan recommendations."

In fact, some of this work is already underway. The four towns (Amenia, Dover, North East and Pawling) will be working with the HVP, PDCTC and NYSDOT to implement Strategy 5.2- *Modify zoning to provide a Limited Access Overlay Zone*. The purpose of the project is to develop appropriate zoning language to allow the towns to control new access points in cooperation with NYSDOT. The project may also serve as a statewide model for similar areas.



*Typical commercial development often has two driveways per parcel, creating too many turning conflicts.*



*A Limited Access Overlay Zone can limit the number of driveways per mile on larger lot frontages, thereby lowering potential conflict points and reducing congestion and safety problems .*



# The Town of Union Vale Would Like to Preserve This View

By Lindsay Carille, Planner

Union Vale recognizes that growth is inevitable. It also recognizes that the Town is a rural, scenic area that is rich in natural and historic resources. To keep it that way, the Town is following up its new Master Plan with a proposed new zoning code.

The proposed zoning changes have many commendable features which follow the guidelines set forth not only in their Master Plan, but also in Greenway Connections and Dutchess County's Plan, *Directions*. Included are a new Town Center District intended for mixed-use development, and the addition of overlay districts that include a Flood-Fringe Overlay, an Environmental Resource Overlay and a Scenic Corridor Overlay.

Among the proposed zoning standards are:

- Site Plan Design Criteria – The proposed code offers detailed and comprehensive guidelines for site plans **(standards for compatibility to the Town's character and all aspects of the building design and site features are clearly stated.)** Details such as internal roadways, pedestrian and bicyclist circulation, ecological considerations and compatibility of building design to the Town's character are all included in site plan review.
- Sketch Plan Conference- Before the applicant spends a lot of money on a preliminary site plan, Union Vale will insist on a sketch plan conference. This will enable discussion of Town objectives and preferred developmental principles before the applicant takes a step in the wrong direction.
- Residential Cluster Development – The proposed code allows the Board to require the cluster subdivision technique if the Board finds that it would benefit the Town. **The cluster provision will preserve not only open space, but agricultural lands, historic buildings, scenic roads and vistas, and environmentally sensitive areas.** This provision also provides for **minimum open space requirements** dependent upon the zoning district and **provides encouragement of diverse housing types** (duplex detached, semi-detached or multi-family) in developments of more than ten dwelling units.



Provisions for a sketch plan conference and the explicit design criteria provided will not only ensure a site plan that is compatible with the Town's character, but will provide for a streamlined application process where the standards for approval are clearly set.

The Town of Union Vale, like many other municipalities, realizes that large subdivisions in Dutchess County are no longer uncommon (countywide, there are currently 90 applications for residential housing projects of 20 units or more, according to the PDCTC Major Projects Report). Preparing for residential growth and understanding that providing the opportunity for diverse, attainable housing can only benefit a community are important characteristics of smart growth that Union Vale has embraced.

Within the standards for certain special permit uses are two provisions that are quite innovative. The first outlines **dimensional limitations, design standards and restrictions for fuel pumps and associated canopy structures**, including:

- A pleasing roof design.
- The use of natural finishes.
- Exclusion of the use of reflective or glossy materials such as plastic, lacquers and other shiny materials.
- A canopy that shall employ a non-illuminated fascia and shall display no advertising messages, corporate logos or similar features on such fascia.

## "Keeping the Character"

- A canopy that shall include recessed lighting arranged and shielded so as to reflect light downward with the direct sources of such illumination not visible from any public street or roadway or adjoining property.

The second provision is located within the standards for **restaurants, fast food or drive-in facilities**, and is worth repeating in its entirety:

"The standard design package for any franchise facility shall be subject to modification so as to comply with the architectural and site plan preferences of the Town of Union Vale so as to achieve the community's land use and design objectives as set forth in the Town Master Plan and embodied in this Chapter."

The Town of Union Vale is echoing one of the Greenway Guides on how to make sure that franchises fit in, "By simply asking for better." By establishing design criteria for Planning or Zoning Board approval, the community will have more power to decide what they would like to see in their town, and will not have to accept corporate design requirements if they conflict with the Town's character.

To see the proposed Zoning Code in its entirety you can access the Town of Union Vale web page at [www.marist.edu/unionvale](http://www.marist.edu/unionvale).



Lower Verbank Bridge, 2002

- 66 Years Later



## Call for Nominations

The Dutchess County Planning Federation is currently seeking to fill three vacancies on the Board of Directors. Candidates must currently serve on a Dutchess County municipal governing board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Advisory Board or Council, municipally established Greenway Committee, or the Dutchess County Planning Board.

Interested candidates should send a letter of interest with their name, address, day and evening phone numbers and e-mail address to:

Dutchess County Planning Federation  
Attn: Nominations 2003  
27 High Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601

A slate of candidates will be voted in at the 2003 Awards Dinner being held January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2003.

*SAVE THE DATE SAVE THE DATE SAVE THE DATE*

## **The Dutchess County Planning Federation's Third Annual Awards Dinner** Has been scheduled for

***Thursday, January 30, 2003 at***

**Casperkill Country Club and Conference Center  
Poughkeepsie, New York**

**Keynote Address by Michael J. DiTullo**  
President & CEO, Mid-Hudson Pattern for Progress

Your invitation will follow

**Please plan to join us on January 30<sup>th</sup>**

## A Picture Is Worth A Thousand Words.....

With increasing traffic and parking demands, the central “Four Corners” intersection in Tivoli was not a very pedestrian-friendly place. There were no marked crosswalks, no room for landscaping or street trees, and cars were often parked too close to the corner, blocking visibility. A Village Streetscape Committee, working with county planning staff and funding from the Poughkeepsie-Dutchess County Transportation Council, created a pedestrian plan with attractive designs for key intersections in the Village. Just completed using Community Development Block Grants, the Four Corners now features an oval crosswalk in brick pavers, flared sidewalks that curve out into the parking lanes, and five new street trees that will grow into a circular grove around the intersection.

Flared sidewalks at crosswalks have multiple benefits:

- Shortens the crossing distance for pedestrians
- Visually narrows the street to slow driving speeds
- Prevents illegal parking too close to the corner
- Improves visibility for both walkers and drivers
- Shelters parked cars from oncoming traffic
- Allows room for landscaping and street trees.



*Before, lots of asphalt allowed quick cornering and parking too close to the intersection.*



*Tivoli's iFour Cornersi, now suitable for strolling.*

# PLAN ON IT

A Dutchess County Planning Federation Newsletter

Dutchess County Planning Federation  
27 High Street, 2nd Floor  
Poughkeepsie, New York 12601

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